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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [KDEM](#) [PO](#) [CG](#)
SUBJECT: BEMBA SIGNALS HARDER LINE TO EU

Classified By: Ambassador Roger Meece. Reason 1.4 (b/d)

¶1. (C) European Chiefs of Mission have told us that former Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba recently spoke with EU Special Envoy Van de Geer regarding his potential return to the DRC. Bemba, still in Portugal ostensibly for medical treatment but in reality living in temporary self-exile, reportedly took a hard line regarding conditions for his return.

¶2. (C) Bemba reportedly told Van de Geer that Bemba needs international participation to ensure his security in the DRC. The Europeans took this to mean likely MONUC participation to protect Bemba, and perhaps political assurances as well. Bemba also reportedly said that political conditions in Kinshasa as well needed to be such that the opposition was free to participate fully in political life, free from intimidation. The implication was that these conditions do not exist presently. Should conditions not enable him to return, Bemba reportedly added that he would likely seek to go to an unspecified third country which he could use as a base for renewed political activity. European Ambassadors said that it appeared Bemba was also implicitly if not explicitly threatening new military action as well from the prospective new base. At least one Chief of Mission, the British Ambassador, speculated that Kampala might be an attractive venue for Bemba, offering possible support for both political and military activity.

¶3. (SBU) MONUC has made it very clear in discussions with the diplomatic community and Congolese politicians that it has no intention of getting back in the business of ongoing VIP protection. MONUC was committed during the Transition to providing protective services for the DRC's Transition Vice Presidents as a result of the agreements reached to produce the 2003 Sun City Accord. These duties, however, consumed substantial MONUC resources, and MONUC feels that such protective duties properly belong to DRC police or other services in the post-election period.

¶4. (C) Comment: This information comes second-hand from Bemba's reported conversation with Van de Geer, and it therefore may have lost something in transmission. From the information reported, however, our take is that Bemba is likely aware of his eroding political position and is looking for renewed leverage. Kengo wa Dondo's election as Senate president offers a threat to Bemba's claim as most prominent opposition politician, and perhaps Bemba is aware that even some of his supposed most prominent party allies privately indicate that they would not be unhappy if Bemba did not return to Kinshasa soon. Bluster and threats are

characteristic of Bemba's style, and perhaps he feels he can provoke some international community action to help his agenda.

15. (C) Comment cont'd: Portugal may well wish to be rid of Bemba, especially as it assumes the EU Presidency, and Bemba may indeed be looking at alternatives. We defer to Embassy Kampala regarding analysis of Uganda policies, but from Kinshasa it seems unlikely that Uganda's Museveni would be interested in providing an exile perch to Bemba, much less any military support, at least in the short term. Bemba has always been obsessed with his personal security, which he often cited to justify his past 500) 600 man personal security force in Kinshasa. President Kabila is unlikely to be very forthcoming to provide what Bemba would likely define as his minimal security and other conditions for return. End comment.

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